

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of January 13, 2015

- I. **ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair John Quinn III, Selectmen Kevin T. Beal (absent), Brad Denny, Dennis Donahue, Lynn Doney, Matthew Gadbois, Kenneth W. Goslant, K. David Maxwell, and James R. Wilson. Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Arlington Supplee (Board of Listers), Tawnya Kristen (GMTA Community Relations Manager), Meredith Birkett (GMTA Director of Planning & Marketing), Brent Blevins (Planning Analyst, Cabot Hosiery Mills), Ric Cabot (President/CEO, Cabot Hosiery Mills), Joshua Jennings, Warren Hagy, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Prior to the regular meeting, the Town Select Board held a Public Hearing beginning at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of receiving public comment regarding the proposed closure of the eastern loop of Robinson Road from its intersection with Vermont Route 64 westward to the public access for the Robinson Cemetery. The Town Select Board is considering this action in response to numerous complaints from area residents regarding speeding vehicles, trash dumping, etc. The affected road section would be privatized ("thrown up") with the land reverting to the adjacent landowner.

Joshua Jennings is the Robinson Road resident who first made this request to the Select Board last September and he was present tonight to affirm that the problems remain ongoing. He added that six (6) years ago he made a successful request to have the speed limit on Robinson Road set at twenty-five miles per hour (25 MPH). However, this limit has largely been ignored and Mr. Jennings is concerned about the safety of his children with the speeding traffic. He confirmed that the eastern section of the loop that is targeted for closure is where most of the bad behavior is taking place. Mr. Jennings added that Manager Schulz and Road Foreman Ray Hudson had come out to inspect the area and found that there would be no problems with road maintenance (i.e. snowplow turnarounds, etc.) of the remaining section of road. Manager Schulz noted that the Select Board is already on record as endorsing this action and holding this public hearing is part of the formal process of discontinuing the eastern loop of the road.

There being no other questions or comments, the public hearing closed at 7:08 p.m. The regular meeting began immediately.

- II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. **SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Manager Schulz had no changes to the posted agenda. He also confirmed that an executive session would be held to discuss a legal matter.
- IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):**

- a. **Tawnya Kristen and Meredith Birkett, Green Mountain Transit Agency (GMTA).** Ms. Kristen and Ms. Birkett provided the Select Board members with updates regarding the weekday Northfield-Montpelier Commuter service, the weekly (Wednesdays) shuttle service within Northfield, and the unscheduled transportation to medical and other facilities provided to qualified individuals. Ms. Kristen stated that after contacting Northfield seniors, she learned about their desire for direct bus service to the Berlin Mall (i.e., the newly expanded Wal-Mart, etc.). Therefore, starting in early February 2015, there will be one trip to and from the Berlin Mall each Wednesday. Manager Schulz asked if GMTA's funding request to Northfield residents is the same as last year. Ms. Kristen confirmed that it was.

Ms. Birkett then provided information on the weekday commuter service, which she stated has seen a fifty percent (50%) increase in ridership this past year. Part of this increase can be attributed to a change in the bus schedule last spring that was designed to better fit the working hours of Northfield residents working in Montpelier. In addition, it had been anticipated that ridership would increase each year as more potential users became aware of it. This commuter route is subsidized by a three (3) year federal grant and Ms. Birkett felt that the service's apparent success made it likely that this support will be renewed. In addition, if ridership continues to grow, it is possible that the twenty percent (20%) matching amount paid by the Town of Northfield will decrease. Chair Quinn and the other Board members then thanked Ms. Kristen and Ms. Birkett for the valuable information.

- b. **Brent Blevins and Ric Cabot, Cabot Hosiery Mills: Potential Expansion Plans.** Mr. Blevins and Mr. Cabot had asked to address the Select Board tonight regarding their expansion plans for Cabot Hosiery and what steps they would like the Town Select Board to take in order to facilitate the process. Mr. Cabot stated that his family's business has operated in Northfield for over forty (40) years. The company went through some hard times about a decade ago but thanks to the perseverance of his employees and the development (and great popularity) of their Darn Tough Vermont® line, the situation has turned around so much that the current facility is too small to keep up with demand. Mr. Blevins noted that in recent years, the number of Cabot Hosiery employees has increased from 110 to 160 and the number of knitting machines on site from 77 to 142. The current expansion plans would increase the number of employees to 500 by 2019 with a similar increase in knitting machines. Cabot Hosiery already has agreements in place to purchase adjoining parcels to facilitate the first phase of this proposed expansion. Mr. Blevins stated that Cabot Hosiery does need four (4) actions from the Town of Northfield to further the process. First, Cabot Hosiery would like the Town to discontinue the end of Whetstone Drive where some of the future development is planned. The Town could privatize this section of road and turn the land over to the adjoining property owner (Cabot Hosiery). Secondly, there is a capped water line coming down from a nearby reservoir that would have to be relocated. Third, Cabot Hosiery would like the Town's permission to build a new parking lot on top of the existing sewer line to the site. Finally, Cabot Hosiery would like a zoning waiver from the Town regarding the size of this parking lot. Since the business operates in three (3) shifts, there does not need to be space allotments for all the employees.

Selectman Goslant asked if the aforementioned sewer line would remain in place. Manager Schulz said that it would since it is well built. Only the water line would need to be relocated. Chair Quinn then asked what the Town can do now to facilitate Cabot Hosiery's expansion plans. Manager Schulz said a public hearing would need to be held before the section of Whetstone Drive was privatized. The amount of land to be transferred must be determined before the hearing can be scheduled. Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to move forward in this process and hold any required public hearing(s) as soon as possible. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

- c. **Arlington Supplee, Board of Listers: Town-Wide Reappraisal Update.** Mr. Supplee reported that the reappraisal is proceeding on schedule. There are about twenty (20) parcels that will need to be reviewed an additional time. In addition, there are six (6) parcels that are currently under development and will need to be revisited in a couple months. When the reviews are completed, the final data will be input into system and the reappraisal booklet that will be distributed to all property owners should be ready to go to the printer in early April. Since Northfield's CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) is at 84.4%, the average increase in property values should be about fifteen percent (15%). However, this will not be a uniform increase as most properties will go up in value but some will go down.

Chair Quinn asked why the Town did not simply look at the property sales over the past three (3) years or so in order to determine how much property values have increased in recent years. Mr. Supplee said that the State of Vermont requires that all parcels be evaluated during the same time frame. In addition, individual property sales do not provide an accurate measure for overall property values because of all the unique factors that cause sale prices to go up and down. He added that when this reappraisal was conducted, the FEMA floodplain maps were taken into account to determine the actual value of a parcel, recognizing that the sale price of the property would be deflated due to its location. This was not done during the previous reappraisal.

Between the news regarding Cabot Hosiery's planned expansion and the good progress of the town-wide reappraisal, Selectman Denny felt that this has been a very positive meeting. He believed that the last town-wide reappraisal process was a disaster but this time it has been done the right way all the way through.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. **December 9, 2014 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-2, with Selectmen Doney and Wilson abstaining.**
- b. **December 9, 2014 (Budget Meeting #3).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Donahue, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 6-0-2, with Selectmen Doney and Wilson abstaining.**
- c. **December 11, 2014 (Budget Meeting #4).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Donahue, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
- d. **December 16, 2014 (Budget Meeting #5).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Donahue, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

VI. APPROVAL OF BILLS

- a. **Validation of Warrant #13-15.** Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Denny, to validate the approval by signature of Warrant #13-15 in the amount of \$501,663.39. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
- b. **Warrant #14-15.** Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve Warrant #14-15 in the amount of 567,470.69. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
- c. **Bi-Weekly Payroll through December 7, 2014.** Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$95,430.22. Chair Quinn inquired why there were Police Department overtime expenses during this period. Manager Schulz thought that it might be due to the Thanksgiving holiday but will check into this. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
- d. **Bi-Weekly Payroll through December 21, 2014.** Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$89,000.49. Chair Quinn had the same question as before regarding overtime expenses. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
- e. **Bi-Weekly Payroll through January 4, 2015.** Motion by Selectman Donahue, seconded by Selectman Maxwell, to approve the bi-weekly payroll expenses in the amount of \$88,587.55. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

VII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **DRAFT 2015 Town Meeting Warning.** Manager Schulz stated that the warning needs to be approved and signed by the Select Board before the end of the month. He highlighted a couple items on the warning. The first was an article that would ask for voter authorization for the Town to withdraw from its membership in the Mad River Resource Management Alliance. The second was a request for voter authorization for the Select Board to enter into tax stabilization agreements. The latter article had been put before the voters at the November 4, 2014 Special Town Meeting. Although the article was supported by 62.6% of voters, it fell just short of the two-thirds (2/3) requirement for tax stabilization agreements "relating to commercial or industrial property" [V.S.A. Title 24, §2741(b)]. Chair Quinn suggested that the language in the article should be revised for clarity so voters will know what they're voting on. Selectman Denny feared that the article wording probably was done that way by a lawyer in order to pass legal muster.

The Select Board members also expressed concern regarding the number of non-profit organizations (20) seeking public funds on the warning. The request from the Montpelier Senior Activity Center was seen as particularly egregious since Northfield has its own thriving Senior Center and there were fears potential funding could be thus diverted out of town. There was a suggestion that the Select Board look into revising the requirements for such groups to be placed on the warning, such as banning petitions that contained more than one organization. Manager Schulz will look into whether or not this is legal.

- b. **Town Clerk Request to Adjust Dog Licensing Fees.** Town Clerk Kim Pedley sent the Select Board a request to adjust the current dog licensing fees, which have not been changed for over sixteen (16) years. The increases would be minimal: from \$11 to \$13 for a neutered/spayed canine; from \$15 to \$19 for an unaltered canine; from \$13 to \$16 for late registration of a neutered/spayed canine; and from \$19 to \$22 for late registration of an unaltered canine. Ms. Pedley noted in her memo that \$4 of each licensing fee is forwarded to the State of Vermont. Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Donahue, to approve the adjustment in dog licensing fees as recommended by Town Clerk Kim Pedley. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
 - c. **Capital Expense Note (2014 Western Star).** Motion by Selectman Wilson, seconded by Selectman Denny, to approve and sign the Capital Expense Note for the 2014 Western Star in the amount of \$54,553 at 1.22% interest; to approve and sign the Capital Expense Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
 - d. **Bond Anticipation Note (Fire Pumper Truck).** Motion by Selectman Wilson, seconded by Selectman Donahue, to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Note for the Fire Pumper truck in the amount of \$30,000 at 1.22% interest; to approve and sign the Bond Anticipation Borrowing Resolution; and to approve and sign the No-Arbitrage and Use of Proceeds Certificate. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**
- VIII. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS.** The Select Board members had nothing to add at this time. There was an additional legal matter that may be discussed during the executive session.
- IX. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT**
- a. **Town Meeting Elected Office Petitions.** Manager Schulz reported that Town Clerk Pedley asked him to remind residents that petitions now are available in her office for anyone wants to be put on the Town Meeting Ballot in order to seek election. The positions to be voted upon by Australian Ballot are: Grand Juror, 1 year; Selectman, 3 year seat; Selectman, 2 year seat; School Director, 3 year seat; School Director, 2 year seat; School Director, 2 years remainder of a 3 year seat; Lister, 3 year seat; Town Clerk, 3 years; Town Agent, 1 year; Trustee of the Brown Public Library, 3 year seat; and Trustee of the Brown Public Library, 3 year seat. Completed petitions must contain the signatures of at least thirty (30) Northfield-registered voters and are due back in the Town Clerk's Office by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, January 26, 2015.
- X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.
- XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION.** Motion by Selectman Wilson, seconded by Selectman Donahue, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1), in order to discuss one or more legal matters with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 8-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:45 p.m.

Motion by Selectman Denny, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to come out of executive session.
Motion passed 8-0-0.

The Board came out of executive session at 9:15 p.m. No action was taken.

- XII. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Donahue to adjourn.
Motion passed 8-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of January 27, 2015.